SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

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SENATE DEMS APPROVE MORE RIGOROUS HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Revised standards support Governor's goal of well-educated workforce

LANSING – In a rare show of bi-partisan support, Senate Republicans sided with Senate Democrats in unanimously approving stricter graduation standards for high school students. The more rigorous curriculum will include increase emphasis on English language arts, math, science, and social science. In addition, students will be required to participate in an on-line course. The revised standards are a response to Governor Granholm's year-long message that a more challenging curriculum is a critical part of Michigan's economic future. The new standards will apply to students entering the 8th grade in 2006.

"In light of expanding competition for high-tech jobs; in light of increasing awareness that high school alone is no longer enough; and in light of the lieutenant governor's report on higher education that found many students unprepared for college level work, it's time to take action," Sen. Bob Emerson, Democratic Caucus leader, said. "There's no question that these improved standards will produce a well-educated and well-prepared workforce that will contribute to Michigan's 21st century economy."

The revised standards will also require all high school students to earn two credits in a language other than English before receiving a diploma. American Sign Language (ASL) will count toward this requirement. This requirement will take effect with 9th graders beginning in 2009. Additionally, all 7th graders will be required to take a career pathways course.

"Our students are not only competing with students across this nation, but throughout the world," said Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman (D-Detroit). "We need higher foreign language requirements. In order for our children to compete in today's global economy, learning a foreign language is critical to their success."

Parents or legal guardians of students would be able to request modifications of the math or science requirements after the first semester of 11th grade, or modifications of the algebra II requirement at the end of 10th grade under certain circumstances.

""Our goal is to make Michigan students the standard rather than the norm, and we are being proactive toward achieving that goal," Sen. Dennis Olshove (D-Warren) said. "While concerns still exist with some of the language, this legislation is a step in the right direction."

"Our children are competing in the 21st century," said Sen. Deb Cherry (D-Burton). "We live in a global economy where the level of competition has been raised. Therefore, we need to raise the level of education requirements for our students, so they are equipped to succeed in the job market of tomorrow."